

“Ask The Plant Groom”™ by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom™

For: QA1041

Is there a good maple tree that does well in Texas? – G. J.

The news is good here. Look for a maple known as Shantung. This beauty grows in all areas of our state. It even performs well in alkaline clay soils.

Shantung maple is a Texas Super Star plant. Now is a great time to install and enjoy fall color for many years to come.

When should we bring our houseplants indoors? - G. T.

For most of Texas all tropical houseplants should be indoors by mid Nov. Always catch your local weather forecast because an early frost or freeze could occur. One frost/freezing can severely damage or terminate tender tropical plants.

Is it too late in the year to plant lawn grass? – T. K.

If your question is regarding the warm season lawn grasses we most often grow as lawns the answer is yes with one exception. Along our coast and in the Rio Grande valley they may be successfully planted.

Fescue and Reveille bluegrass may be still successfully planted where they are well adapted.

A temporary lawn of ryegrass may be planted statewide. This grass will “fizzle” next spring around the time to plant St Augustine, Bermuda or centipede.

We are looking for a tall growing evergreen plant to screen an area and would like to know what you recommend. - D. H.

On the top on my list is Nellie R. Stevens Holly. Buford Holly and Wax Myrtle are two additional possibilities. Now is a great time to plant any of these.

I hear some folks talk about not using leaves as a mulch while others recommend them. What's the real story? - S. M.?

Dried leaves that are small or large ones that are processed through some type of shredder work well as a mulch. Large leaves applied several inches thick could "plate" or stick together until decomposed. Until decomposition begins the possibility of water reaching the root systems may be reduced.

Bottom line? Use leaves as a mulch if you wish but do "crunch", shred, mow or in some way make large leaves smaller before using. One method is to rake into a windrow and run a mower over them. If you have a mower that can catch the chopped leaves take the bagged goody and apply directly from the bag.

Leaves shredded by any mechanical method are also great additions to compost piles. Find ways to use all leaves and avoid sending them to the landfill.

Dale's notes:

- Now is a good time to look for fall color. When you see trees, shrubs or other plants expressing colors you enjoy identify them, select the ones you wish to plant in your landscape and install them now.
- With cool days and nights it's also time to select and install cool/cold season color. Remember, pansies do their bloom best in full sun locations.
- After the first killing frost/freeze remove dead plant parts and add to the compost pile.
- For personal, free and live assistance with your horticulture questions M-F, 9am – 4pm call the Master Gardeners at 214-904-3053.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist -Dallas County, Texas Ccooperative Extension, Author, Columnist, Radio/TV Host is also known state wide as The Plant Groom™. Send your lawn, garden and landscape questions to Dale at [dalegroom@mycvc.net](mailto:dalegroom@mycvc.net)

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